



GEORGIA OSTEOPATHIC
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GOMA News & Updates

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Osteopathic Physicians and their DOgs

Parts of article from Harvard Health Publishing February 2016

There's a reason dogs are dubbed man's best friend. Dogs—and cats, too—make wonderful companions and provide many emotional and physical benefits. "I'm a believer in the beneficial effects of having a pet, and I'm impressed with the ability of dogs in particular to form bonds with human beings. I think the science is starting to support their special ability to do that," says psychiatrist Dr. Greg Fricchione, director of the Harvard-affiliated Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine. In light of National Pet Week being May 1 – 8, 2022, we decided to review the health benefits of pet ownership and then highlight five D.O.s in Georgia and their dogs.

The most obvious benefits of pet ownership are love and companionship. "We do best medically and emotionally when we feel securely attached to another, because we're mammals and that's the way we've evolved," says Dr. Fricchione. He points out that we feel especially secure with dogs and cats because of the unconditional love they

provide. "No matter what you do or say, your dog or cat accepts you and is attached to you," says Dr. Fricchione. Taking care of a dog or a cat can provide a sense of purpose and a feeling of validation when you wake up or come home and there's someone who's happy to see you.

The emotional benefits of having a pet can translate into physiological ones as well. "When you feel securely attached to this living being, there are biological brain effects that reduce stress response, so it may affect your breathing rate or blood pressure or oxygen consumption or anxiety level," says Dr. Fricchione. "There was even a recent study in the journal Science about how oxytocin is boosted in both the dog and the human when a dog owner stares into eyes of the dog. That's really fascinating." Oxytocin is one of the body's "feel good" chemicals and also plays a role in social bonding.

Other physical benefits of owning a dog or a cat come from the activity necessary to take care of it, such as playing with the animal or taking it for a walk. And there can be social benefits of dog walking if you meet other people along the way.

Chris Geltz, DO retired from his OB/GYN practice in Stone Mountain a few months before the Covid-19 pandemic changed the world. He serves as a delegate to the AOA House of Delegates representing Georgia.

He wrote, "This is Diva. She is nearly a 4 y/o black Goldendoodle. She is very protective of our house and family, almost too protective at times. She just about jumps through the front windows when the UPS truck or mail person show up. She loves riding in my SUV and is a great theft deterrent. Likes to cuddle on my lap, but she doesn't

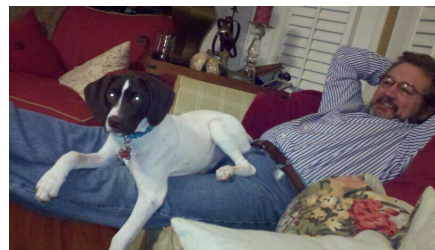


know that at 72 lbs, she is not a lap dog.”



Bill Kriegel, DO is a family physician with additional certification in sports medicine who practices at Piedmont Physicians of Vinings. He is a 1987 graduate of the A.T. Still University of Health Sciences, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Kriegel introduced Daisy & BB who are “both Lab mix rescues, both around 4 years old” and that they inspire him by “reminding me to have fun and stay in the fight.”

Scott Keller, DO retired from his family practice in Lilburn in September 2021, but he continues to be very involved at the Grace Village Medical Clinic in Clarkston, Georgia that serves largely an immigrant population for free. Dr. Keller is the medical director of the clinic. Dr. Keller wrote, “How about a picture of my dog, Abee? A pharmaceutical company manager gave her to me 11 years ago after my wife passed away and my old dog died 2 weeks later. She is German short hair pointer and helped get me thru tough time when Debbie passed. She loves to hike and doesn’t know a stranger. Not a great watchdog.”





Harvey Apple, DO was not feeling well due to recent fractures of vertebrae requiring surgery and 13 days in the hospital, but he wanted to share a photograph of him when he was upright along with his dog Hank. His wife Jan reports that Hank “is the best medicine”. Dr. Apple is a 1973 graduate of PCOM in Philadelphia, and practiced family medicine until 2005. Dr. Apple served as the director of the post-graduate program at Doctor’s Hospital/Northlake Regional Medical Center 1987 to 1990.

John Destito, DO is an emergency medicine physician who is working at an urgent care facility for American Family Care in Woodstock. Dr. Destito is a 1988 graduate A.T. Still University of Health Sciences, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine. He wrote of his deceased dog, “Once, I thought my dog was sent to me for me to love, and care for him for his whole life, now I’m convinced he was sent to love and care for me for his whole life. And, he did that very well. His name was Hunter and he was an American Cocker Spaniel. He was 13.”



Over the past two years, GOMA has been listing the free mental health hotline at the end of each newsletter to make sure that GOMA members take care of themselves, but maybe for some doctors, the phone number of the local

Humane Society might be more appropriate. Pets can help doctors and patients in so many ways.

2022 PCOM Georgia Commencement



The 2022 commencement for the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, Doctor of Pharmacy and Doctor of Physical Therapy programs at PCOM Georgia will be held May 26 at 11 a.m. at the Ameris Bank Amphitheatre, 2200 Encore Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30019. The osteopathic program will be led by Dean and Chief Academic

Officer of the Osteopathic Program Andrea “Andy” Mann, DO, FAAP.

The commencement speaker will be Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine alumni Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni has been an educator for more than 50 years. Most notably, he is the former dean of osteopathic medicine at the Nova Southeastern University - Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (NSU-KPCOM), serving from 1998 to 2015

[Click here to see profiles of some of the graduates.](#)

For questions regarding the commencement ceremony, [email Ashley Jones.](#)

CMS opens IDR portal for out-of-network claims under the No Surprises Act

For those claims for which the open negotiations period expired prior to the portal opening, providers now have 15 business days, until May 6, to initiate the IDR process. For claims currently in the open negotiations period, the standard timelines will apply (i.e. the IDR process must be initiated within 4 business days of the open negotiations period

ending). Go to <https://nsa-idr.cms.gov/paymentdisputes/s/> to be aware of all the requirements as well as to initiate the process.

Georgia State 2022 Legislation



The 2022 Georgia Legislative Session adjourned on April 4. The one item that must be passed each legislative session is the next year's budget. The 2023 budget details a \$30.2 billion and was able to reverse many of the deep cuts of the past two years with most agencies returning to pre-pandemic funding levels. Some of the good news is that there is an increase in public health and mental health funding. Now, we wait to see what Governor Kemp will sign or veto. Constitutionally, Kemp has 40 days to sign legislation or veto it. He can also let a bill become law without his signature, leaving a gray area for some bills to become law. As a general note, any legislation that did not pass, is dead, and will have to resubmitted in 2023.

The highlight of this session was the unanimous votes on H.B. 1013 Mental Health Parity Act which was introduced by Rep. David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) and is an omnibus bill to enact the recommendations of the Georgia Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission. Besides its ironic numbering, the bill has over twenty components including forcing insurance companies to treat mental health problems equally with medical problems; implementing medical loss ratios on Medicaid HMOs forcing them to spend 85% of the annual money on actual care for patients, and a loan forgiveness program for doctors going into mental health and substance abuse fields. H.B. 1013 was signed into law by Governor Kemp on April 4th with Rep. David Ralston looking on is shown in the picture above.

[Bills that passed both houses and await Governor's signature:](#)

H.B. 752, which would implement a Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD) was introduced by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta). The PAD would allow patients with mental illness to make their wishes in relation to mental health care known and designate a health care agent related to mental health care. This legislation passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk.

H.B. 961 by Rep. Chuck Efstration (R-Dacula) would allow for evidence of a non-party's fault and authorize apportionment of damages in single-defendant lawsuits. This legislation passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk.

Rep. Sharon Henderson (D-Covington) introduced H.B. 937 which would provide for Medicaid coverage for annual mammograms at no cost to the recipient. This legislation passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk.

H.B. 972 was introduced by Rep. Dave Belton (R-Buckhead) and would make changes to the "Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists Licensing Law," including deleting that under their practice act that, "diagnose shall not mean the diagnosis of any neuropsychological functioning or conditions" and a number of other updates the law. This legislation. passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk.

Rep. Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper) introduced H.B. 1042, which would authorize authorities to administer grants to developers who open "primary care medical facilities" in health shortage areas. These facilities would then be operated by a dentist, physician, or "mental health care providers" (psychiatrist, psychologist, professional counselor, marriage and family therapist, clinical social worker, or clinical nurse specialist in psychiatric/mental health). This legislation has been assigned to the House Health & Human Services Committee. H.B. 1042 passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk.

S.B. 341 would provide guidelines for the prior authorization of a prescribed medication for chronic conditions requiring ongoing medication therapy under certain circumstances. S.B. 341 passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk. See below for Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, M.D. (R-Marietta) other two less successful healthcare bills.

S.B. 345 was introduced by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) would prohibit state and local governments from mandating vaccine passports. GOMA opposed this legislation when it had wording that was suggestive that school vaccines would not be required, which has been amended to eliminate that terminology. The amended legislation passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk.

S.B. 330 by Sen. John Albers (R-Roswell) that would (1) prohibit insurers from cancelling, modifying coverage, refusing to issue, or refusing to renew life insurance policies solely because the applicant or insured donated a liver or kidney, (2) provide for a tax credit for individuals who donate all or part of their liver, pancreas, kidney, intestine, lung, or bone marrow, and (3) create an income tax credit for employers that provide paid leave to employee donors for periods of medically necessary leave from work. This bill passed both houses.

S.B. 352 by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R-White), which would allow for licensure by endorsement for certain licenses to spouses of firefighters, health care providers, and law enforcement officers who relocate to the State of Georgia. This legislation passed both houses.

Bills that failed to get the votes:

H.B. 867 by Rep. Mark Newton, M.D. (R-Augusta), which would require pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and insurers to disclose to patients the final true net cost for a prescription drug, less all rebates actually received by the pharmacy benefits manager or its health plan client subsequent to the point of sale and base the patient's cost-sharing on the final true net cost. This legislation only

passed the House and will have to be reintroduced next year.

H.B. 856 by Rep. Kim Schofield (D-Atlanta) would create the Legislative Commission on the Disparate Impact of COVID-19. This bill failed to pass either house

H.B. 939 by Rep. Meshia Mainor (D-Atlanta) that would provide for notice of admission and daily updates from a facility to the parent or legal guardian of an involuntary minor patient under 12 years of age. Failed to pass either house.

H.B. 996 by Rep. Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) allow individuals credentialed in the field of nutrition to provide advice, counseling, or evaluations in matters of food, diet, or nutrition under certain circumstances without receiving a dietetics license. This legislation, which dramatically changes who is allowed to provide nutrition counseling has been referred to the House Regulated Industries Committee. Did not pass either house.

H.B. 1000 was introduced by Rep. Stan Gunter (R-Blairsville) and would provide an exception for rabies vaccination of dogs and cats for animals where that vaccine would compromise the animal's health or if it is medically unnecessary. This legislation was referred to the House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee. Did not pass either house.

H.B. 1003 introduced by Rep. Erick Allen (D-Smyrna) that would prevent the Department of Community Health from entering into or renewing any contract with an otherwise qualified entity for the State Health Benefit Plan who has either terminated early without cause or forced a renegotiation of an unexpired contract with a Georgia-based hospital or health care system within the prior 24 months, unless the qualified entity is the only available qualified entity. This legislation was referred to the House Insurance Committee. Did not pass either house.

H.B. 1038 introduced by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta), which would update the tax credit for physicians and health

care professionals who practice in rural areas. Did not pass either house.

H.B. 1057 was introduced by Rep. Gerald Greene (R-Cuthbert) and would set a standard suite of services that community service boards are required to provide in their respective service areas. This legislation was assigned to the House Health & Human Services Committee. Did not pass either house.

H.B. 855 by Rep. Gregg Kennard (R-Lawrenceville) that would provide workers' compensation coverage for first responders for post-traumatic stress disorder arising in the course and scope of employment. Did not pass either house.

H.R. 629 by Rep. Darlene Taylor (R-Thomasville) introduced that would create the House State Health Benefit Plan Study Committee. Did not pass either house.

S.B. 338 by Sen. Dean Burke, M.D. (R-Bainbridge) would increase postpartum coverage under Medicaid from six months to one year following birth. GOMA supported this legislation and it passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk.

Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, M.D. (R-Marietta) introduced three bills (S.B. 340, S.B. 341, & S.B. 342). S.B. 340 updates provisions related to funding of medical education provided by hospital authorities and designated teaching hospitals. S.B. 341 would provide guidelines for the prior authorization of a prescribed medication for chronic conditions requiring ongoing medication therapy under certain circumstances. S.B. 342 would provide for annual reporting regarding mental health parity in health care plans. S.B. 340 was referred to Senate Health and Human Services while S.B. 341 and 342 were referred to Senate Insurance and Labor. Only SB 341 passed both houses, and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk.

S.B. 351 by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R-White) which would have extensively revise the "Women's Right to Know Act", including requiring the use of an informed consent authorization form and expanding reporting requirements.

Additionally, the legislation would make prescribing abortion pills without following the state law a crime and allow civil penalties of up to \$100,000 per violation. Reporting violations may threaten a physician's license and open them up to malpractice suits even where no physical injury occurs. Physicians would be required to have the patient sign off on 15 different statements prior to prescribing the pills and a follow-up visit two weeks later would be required. Finally, abortion pills could not be provided on the campus of any public or private school, college or university in the state. This legislation did not pass either house.

S.B. 372 was introduced by Sen. Brandon Beach (R-Alpharetta) that would (1) prohibit a person or governmental entity from refusing, withholding from, or denying a person any local or state services, goods, facilities, advantages, privileges, licensing, educational opportunities, health care access, or employment opportunities based on the person's vaccination status or whether the person has an immunity passport, (2) prohibit an employer from refusing employment to a person, barring a person from employment, or discriminating against a person in compensation or in a term, condition, or privilege of employment based on the person's vaccination status or whether the person has an immunity passport, and (3) prohibit a public accommodation from excluding, limiting, segregating, refusing to serve, or otherwise discriminating against a person based on the person's vaccination status or whether the person has an immunity passport. This legislation would not apply to schools and would allow health care facilities to ask for vaccination status to determine whether reasonable accommodations should be provided. An individual may not be required to receive any vaccine which is allowed for use under an emergency use authorization or any vaccine undergoing safety trials. A skilled nursing facility, personal care home, or assisted living community shall be exempt from compliance with this Code section during any period of time that such compliance would result in a violation of regulations or guidance issued by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services or the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This legislation has been

assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Did not pass either house.

Time is Running Out!

The Virtual Osteopathic Conference (VOC) that happened earlier in the year can still help you have your access to 48 AOA Category 1-A and AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™. These are available in 8 hour increments and are completely virtual meaning that it is COVID-conscious and zero travel costs. The selection of family medicine, psychiatry, internal medicine, dermatology, and more topics was described by attendees as, “Excellent, knowledgeable speakers and diverse useful subjects.”

You must register by June 1 to complete courses on-demand until June 30. [Click here to register and view details about the schedule and faculty.](#) GOMA benefits when Georgia doctors take advantage of this offering.

National Osteopathic Medicine Week at PCOM Georgia

On April 18 PCOM Georgia kicked off the week of celebrating National Osteopathic Medicine Week by providing an opportunity to educate and inform others about DOs and the osteopathic medical profession. [See more here.](#)



Roger Sorg, DO



We are sad to announce that on March 27, 2022, Roger Sorg, DO (Hilton Head Island, South Carolina) died. Dr. Sorg was a member of GOMA when he first started his practice in 1972 and continued to be an out-of-state member of GOMA when he moved his practice to Hilton Head Island, SC in 1988.

Roger James Sorg, DO was born June 1942. He graduated from Bowling Green State University in 1964 with a B.S. in Chemistry and a minor in Clarinet/Saxophone. He got his D.O. degree in 1968 from College of Osteopathic Medicine & Surgery in Des Moines, Iowa and did an internship as well as his Pathology Residency (AP & CP) from Botsford Hospital in Farmington (Detroit), Michigan from 1968 to 1972. Sorg started his pathology career at Doctors Hospital in Tucker, Georgia in 1972 and because that was the center of the osteopathic world in Georgia, he is known to many of the DOs in the state. As he found himself enjoying Hilton Head Island more and more, he moved his pathology practice to HHI in 1988. He was certified in Pathology by the American Osteopathic Board of Pathology (1968) and the American Board of Pathology (1975) as well as the American Board of Nuclear Medicine (1970). Sorg served as a Professor of Pathology for Midwestern University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Chicago, IL. He also served as the pathologist/Deputy Coroner for Beaufort County, SC for the past 25 years. His hobby was playing clarinet and sax in the Sun City Orchestra over the past 17 years.

In 1996, after nearly 35 years with a bustling pathology practice, Roger Sorg, DO refocused his medical skills on primary care. Sorg's new focus led him to develop one of the

first Volunteers-in-Medicine (VIM) clinics on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. As an interest in primary care at the VIM, he noticed the high number of low-income patients diagnosed with diabetes. At age 60, Sorg motivated his colleagues to join in taking action. Broad agreement exists on how to manage diabetes, but fewer than 40 percent of those afflicted receive recommended levels of medical care. Dr. Sorg returned to school for Diabetic Educator certification to find a way to help. With his colleagues, they developed a disease management program at the VIM clinic designed after the Joslin Diabetes Clinic to ensure uniform, high-level care for diabetic patients. The clinic had 30,000 patient visits in 2007 with hundreds of new patients diagnosed with diabetes and receiving care for the first time. It achieved significant reductions in several important areas including, diabetic patients' hemoglobin A1c levels, blood pressure, and cholesterol, along with significantly more foot and eye exams. Sorg showed that quality disease management can occur in a free-clinic general-care environment, and his program structure can be easily replicated.

When he was selected as a 2008 Purpose Prize Fellow, he was recognized for bringing comprehensive diabetes treatment to uninsured and low-income people. He was quoted as saying, "We are doing what we were trained to do – be physicians. We are making a tangible difference in the health of the entire community. I cannot imagine NOT using my talents to support our community."

<https://purposeprize.encore.org/>

Plans Cancelled for Facility to Turn Plastic Waste into Fuel

Brightmark Energy and Bibb County cancelled their plans to build "the world's largest" facility to turn plastic waste into fuel. Due to major concerns from the medical community, scientists, environmental groups, and the citizens of the Macon area as well as the influence of the failure of Brightmark's much smaller plant in Indiana to deliver proof of

concept, the cancellation was announced in mid-April. GOMA's April newsletter featured an article about this proposed technology as well as an opinion piece by pulmonologist Atul Bhatnagar, DO, FCCP. That issue of the newsletter had a theme of Earth Day (April 22, 2022) and it is obvious that comments and concerns expressed had an impact on the decision makers. This plastic-to-fuel plant proposal is not completely eliminated. The Macon Newsroom reported that the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority has "agreed to cooperate with potential efforts to build a Brightmark plant somewhere else in Georgia, with the agreement of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs," indicating that the industry is still a threat.

In other words...

*"Looks like what drives me crazy
Don't have no effect on you –
But I'm gonna keep on at it
Till it drives you crazy, too."*

-- Langston Hughes, 'Evil'



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helps advocate for your and all of
Georgia's licensed DOs.*

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